

Abiding Fruit

Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart

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Adorn The Doctrine Titus 2:10

It should come as no surprise to a Christian that doctrine is linked to works. Bad doctrine must invariably lead to defective workmanship or works. Sound Doctrine must produce good works. This is what Paul expects when he writes to Titus. Twice in this letter he speaks of “*sound doctrine*” (see 1:9; 2:1), and five times, he speaks of “*good works*” (see 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14). What does Paul mean by “*sound*” doctrine? The word “*sound*” is the word which speaks of wellness, wholeness, good health. Metaphorically it refers to not mixing with error. In other words, sound doctrine is not mixed with error. What does Paul mean by “*doctrine*”? This is the word for teaching(s), instruction(s) or precepts. Paul is urging Titus to be committed to healthy teaching or instruction – teaching that is true and not error. Now the only true teaching is the truth of the Scriptures. Paul wants Titus to be driven by the Word of God, not as it is manipulated by man, but simply as it is - sincere & pure. This does not come easily. It requires time and affliction.

What does Paul mean when he urge Titus on to “*good works*”? Paul is referring to beautiful and commendable deeds. Paul does not mean that we must be experts in doctrine in order to perform good works. He is simply saying that healthy instruction and teaching must produce beautiful deeds. Why is this so? It is this way because the good works are grounded in the truth. If we could say that good comes from error, then we would be forced to say that the good is mixed with the untrue, and therefore, what kind of good is it? Now Paul inherently recognizes that the good works that he is referring to are not perfect works. There can be no perfect work in this age in these bodies of ours. There can be, however, beautiful and good works that are done as they are motivated by healthy sound doctrine. In other words, we must understand why we do good works and the only answer to that, is because sound doctrine is true.

More than this, it is biblical to say that having come to faith in Christ Jesus; the results must be good works. True saving faith must result in good works. Faith is the tree and good works are the fruit. If our tree does not produce good works, then what kind of fruit are we producing? Certainly not good works, and even more importantly, our supposed faith must then be spurious and false. There can be no true faith without good works and there can be no good works without justifying faith. These are what both Paul and James teach (see Romans 4 & James 2:14 – 26).

Jesus deals with this in Matthew 7:15 – 20. False prophets are recognized by their deeds – they are wolves in sheep’s clothing. They look the part, but act a different part. They say one thing, but live another. True trees produce the true fruit. This necessarily must be so. Grapes do not come from thorn trees. Figs do not come from thistles. Good trees bear good fruit. Bad trees bring forth bad fruit. Jesus says that we can know false prophets – simply by their fruit, their works, their deeds, their actions (see Titus 1:10 – 16). In fact, these false prophets or teachers cannot produce good works because they are false (see esp. 1:16).

Paul is concerned that Titus be an example to the believers of someone who produces good works (see Titus 2:7). He is to be a teacher of sound doctrine (2:1). He is to appoint elders who can teach sound doctrine (1:9).

The goal of redemption is that we might be “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). God’s grace has come to us bringing God’s salvation, and it is this grace of God that trains us to be holy in this present age as we wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (our blessed hope, our great God and Savior). Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from lawlessness and to purify us as a people fit for Himself, and we demonstrate this by eagerly pursuing good works (2:11 – 14).

It is interesting that Paul’s letter to Titus is pastoral in its directions. It is known as a pastoral letter (see also 1 & 2 Timothy). As a pastoral letter it is concerned with the church. The church is made up of all kinds of people. Paul speaks a word to elders (1:5 – 9), to older men (2:2), older women (2:3); young women (2:4, 5) and to younger men (2:6). Paul speaks directly to Titus that he should be an example to all these groups (1:5; 2:1, 7, 15). Paul also speaks a word to slaves (2:9, 10). Slaves should be submissive to their own masters reflecting true servanthood and true faith, and in this way they will adorn the doctrine of God (2:10). The transforming grace of God is magnified by the fruits accompanying sound doctrine. Fruits like cheerfulness, obedience, integrity, dependability and truthfulness. These fruits adorn the believer’s life like a crown is fitting for a king.

All Christians are to obey those in authority (3:1), and we should be willing to demonstrate our obedience by being ready to do every good work., by not speaking evil of anyone, by avoiding quarrels with each other, by being gentle, and showing good manners before and to others (3:1, 2). As usual, Paul reminds Titus and us that we all were once rebels and sinners who hated each other (3:3). This all changed when God’s grace entered our lives through His goodness and kindness. Salvation is ours because God has saved us in mercy, and He has saved us apart from any of our works or merits. We have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit who is lavishly given to every believer. This is all through our Lord Jesus Christ who has justified us by His grace and made us heirs of eternal life (see 3:4 – 7).

How can we escape Titus 3:8 which says, “*The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.*” Paul is stating something reliable when he says that a saying is trustworthy. The things that are reliable are the love of God, the grace of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit in us producing salvation. Titus can speak confidently about these things – in fact, he must insist on these things. This is the true doctrine. By insisting on these things, Titus will be helping all those who have believed to devote themselves to good works. They will not be arrogant, but will treat these things carefully and thus do what God desires them to do.

Christians and churches must avoid all foolish controversies, all dissensions because these kinds of things are unprofitable and worthless. What is worth fighting for? Only the sound doctrine of God which leads to good works. If we lose doctrine, we lose impact upon our own lives and the lives of others. The church is embroiled in many worthless things. It is in the process of abandoning sound doctrine, and we are busy eating the fruit of this folly. As we advance in so many ways, (socially, physically, materially, technologically, and supposedly spiritually), we are selling our souls down the river of godless unbelief because we have thrown away God’s Word. There will never be any true change for the improvement of any person and salvation of any soul apart from the powerful proclamation of the Gospel.

Titus must aim to be approved by God and not self-condemned like the contentious person (Titus 3:8 – 11). This requires submission to Christ and submission to His Word. The hope of eternal life which God promised before all ages began, and which has been revealed in the preaching of the Cross (1:2, 3), must become once again the standard to which we rally. Jesus is Prince Immanuel calling us to stand by Him and proclaim faithfully His Word in the midst of this dark and dangerous world in which we live. The Gospel is true light. Christ has shined into our hearts – let us so shine before others that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.